



The Dangers of Driving in Reverse

Driving in reverse presents drivers with many risks. There is limited visibility, it requires drivers to continually check at least three mirrors and perhaps even twist and turn to see out the back window, and it is not as commonly practiced as forward driving. As a result, backing accounts for 25-30% of vehicle accidents nationwide and backing accidents cause more than 6,000 injuries each year.

Ten Tips for Minimizing Risks While Backing

- 1. Avoid backing up, if possible.** Making a U-turn, driving around the block, and parking in places with a front exit are often safer alternatives to backing up.
- 2. Check before backing.** Visually confirm that there are no objects, vehicles, or persons in the way before backing. If you cannot visually confirm that all is clear, stop, get out, and walk behind the vehicle to have a closer look.
- 3. Avoid distractions.** Talking on a cell phone is never a safe option while driving, and this is especially true of backing. Backing requires the full attention and skill of the driver.
- 4. Know the size dimensions of your vehicle.** This is very important if you are driving a vehicle you may be unfamiliar with, especially one that has a trailer or special height considerations. Remember that larger vehicles have larger blind spots. For example, backing up in an SUV presents more risks than in a car.
- 5. Be extra careful when backing up at night.** Backing at night only adds to the visibility problems. Brake lights are not as bright as headlights and may not illuminate your path nor function as well to catch the attention of pedestrians.
- 6. Check brake lights.** Before driving, it is wise to make sure the brake lights are working.
- 7. Backup slowly.** Take time to check mirrors and give any unseen children time to move away. Rushing to park in a space or reverse direction only increases your risk of overlooking dangers. Patience saves lives.
- 8. Avoid backing into traffic.** Don't back into an intersection from a driveway. In situations where backing into traffic is unavoidable, use a guide.
- 9. Recognize the unique dangers in certain settings.** In residential areas, mall parking lots, near schools, near heavily trafficked sidewalks, and in areas where you may be partially obstructed (e.g. backing out of a narrow alley), it is a good practice to do a visual scan of the premises before backing up. Pedestrians, shopping carts, and other vehicles can appear without notice.
- 10. Be extra careful around children.** Children may not recognize when a vehicle is backing up. You may need to walk behind the vehicle to make sure there are no children or objects in your path.